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## Bridging the Divide through Graphic Novels: Teaching non-Jews' Holocaust Narratives to Jewish Students

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## **Bridging the Divide through Graphic Novels: Teaching non-Jews' Holocaust Narratives to Jewish Students**

In the following paper I argue that the inclusion of Rutu Modan's graphic novel *The Property* and Nora Krug's graphic novel *Belonging* into Holocaust classes in Jewish schools can introduce Jewish students examples of non-Jews relating to the Holocaust in ways that move beyond familiar tropes of either denial or pity and through this, powerfully affect the way they think about the Holocaust. Modan and Krug show how the Holocaust continues to reverberate today and impacts non-Jews, even if it was not their personal tragedy. The significance of including this type of education in Jewish day schools emerges as a result of a confluence of factors that are relevant to contemporary Jewish students. The rise in global anti-Semitism, the inclusion of the Holocaust as part of almost all Jewish day school curricula, and an emphasis within that curricula on teaching about righteous non-Jews who saved Jews' lives, necessitates introducing contemporary Jewish students to examples of non-Jews who think deeply, passionately, and concernedly about the legacy of the Holocaust. Including modern examples of non-Jews like those in Krug's and Modan's works can help to combat the natural tendency of Jewish students to become insular and instead lead to a more thoughtful and nuanced dialogue about the ways that non-Jews should engage with Holocaust commemoration. The two graphic novels provide a new way of thinking about how Holocaust education can be meaningful to Jewish students by showing non-Jews who actively work towards making meaning of the past and who work alongside Jews to craft a new and shared – yet different - narrative about the past, while hopefully forging a path together for a different future.

Over the past decade, Jewish students do not need to look far in order to see that anti-Semitism remains a pernicious and pervasive presence in Western society. In 2019, Tel Aviv University published a study that showed a 13% increase in global anti-Semitic incidents from the previous year (cited in 'Anti-Semitic attacks' 2019). More alarming than the increase, however, was the report's conclusion that 'anti-Semitism is no longer an issue confined to the activity of the far left, far right and radical Islamists triangle – it has mainstreamed and became an integral part of life' (cited in 'Anti-Semitic attacks' 2019). Recent anti-Semitic incidents have included synagogue shootings in the United States, attacks on Jews in the streets of Germany ('German Jews warned' 2019b), and graffiti being spray-painted on tombstones in France (Cossé 2019). The escalation of anti-Semitism in Germany led Felix Klein, the German government's anti-Semitism commissioner, to caution Jews against wearing kippot - ritual head coverings – in recognition that some neighbourhoods and cities were not safe spaces where Jews can show their religion (cited in Walker 2019).

The rise in anti-Semitic incidents is directly correlated to recent findings about European Jews who report feeling at greater risk of endangerment than in preceding years. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2018) reported that 90% of its Jewish respondents believed that anti-Semitism is worsening in their country with 30% saying that they had personally experienced anti-Semitism, and that they had voluntarily chosen to not attend Jewish events out of fear for their safety. Perhaps most alarming is that almost 80% admitted that they would not report minor anti-Semitic incidents to the police because they did not think that it would make a difference to do so.

Alongside the increase in anti-Semitic incidents is the rise of nationalist parties in Europe who have made it a matter of policy to reframe the ways that the Holocaust is addressed in society. Two notable examples are Germany's Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party whose co-leader Alexander Gauland (cited in Laub 2018) described the Holocaust as 'small bird poop in over 1000 years of successful German history' and Poland's Law and Justice (PiS) party which enacted legislation that prohibits ascribing blame to Poland for what befell its Jews during the Holocaust, despite evidence of incidents where Poles did play an active role in massacring Jews.

How Jewish educators teach students about historical and contemporary anti-Semitism can play a significant role in determining how their students come to relate to and understand the shifting attitudes towards their own community. Additionally, by providing students with a way of contextualizing current anti-Semitic incidents in light of historical ones like the Holocaust, and by considering the ways that non-Jews have behaved, curriculum and teachers can play a formative role in shaping how Jewish students understand and relate to the world.

Despite the over 70 years that have passed since the Holocaust, there is minimal research about what Holocaust education looks like or its efficacy in any school system, let alone in Jewish schools. E. Doyle Stevick and Zehavit Gross (2015: 3) wrote that teaching about the Holocaust 'can contribute to making a better world, to protecting human rights and strengthening democracy, and even to preventing genocide' yet they recognize that this position is predicated almost entirely on anecdotal evidence. Jeffrey Alan Ellison (2017: 4) has noted that the few studies that have been completed focus on 'what should be' and not 'what is'. In order to determine how the Holocaust is being taught, Ellison studied over 30 American Jewish schools. He determined that the primary topics that students learn revolve around events from the Nazi era in Europe, and that the overwhelming focus of study was on the Jewish experience. The notable topic that did not focus on Jews was about non-Jews who risked their own lives to save Jews; this topic was included in that over 82% of schools' Holocaust curriculum.

Beyond considering *what* is taught, Ellison also explored *why* the Holocaust was taught. Schools reported wanting to teach the Holocaust so that students are better educated about the past and so that students can become advocates against other genocides. The most important rationale, however, was the relationship between the Holocaust and strengthening a student's Jewish identity. The Holocaust was also used as a way to teach students about past anti-Semitism and also as a bridge for understanding the anti-Semitism that is happening in the world around them and the growing concern of Holocaust denial in a world where fewer survivors are counted among the living from previous decades.

As part of Ellison's research, he also found a clear demarcation between how Jewish schools approach teaching the Holocaust and how non-Jewish schools teach the Holocaust. He (2017: 12) discovered that while Jewish schools emphasized the Holocaust as a unique experience in Jewish history, non-Jewish schools focused on 'teaching about the dangers of prejudice and stereotypes and respect for human rights'. Ellison's observations about contrasting models of Holocaust education as part of universalistic or particularistic pedagogy echo the wider philosophical conversations about teaching the Holocaust. In a review of Israeli publications about how to teach the Holocaust, Gross (2010: 107) noted that there are proponents

for teaching the Holocaust as a universal topic about human rights framed through the lens of Jewish genocide (Auron 2003, and Naveh, Vered, and Shachar 2009). There are also proponents who insist that by universalizing the Holocaust in this way the Holocaust will no longer be recognized as a uniquely Jewish experience (Schatzker 1992)). Lastly, there are proponents (Ofer 2004 and Schweber 2003) who call for a synthesis between the two in which ‘the Holocaust can be understood only if the Jewish and the universal context complement each other’. The bridging of these different outlooks is the foundation of the type of education that I believe can help Jewish students better understand how to navigate the complex ways that anti-Semitism is being manifested today and the ways that non-Jews can relate to the Holocaust and the Jewish community.

Beyond the pedagogical challenges of successful Holocaust education, Claire Gorrara (2019: 111) has identified a further practical challenge in developing Holocaust curriculum. With the passing of each Holocaust survivor and the farther chronologically we are removed from the Nazi era, ‘the Holocaust will move from the realm of communicative memory, remembered with the lifetime of a generation, to that of cultural memory, where past is available to us only via material objects, visual and written narratives and historical sites of memory’. Gorrara suggests that graphic novels can play an important role in effectively facilitating the inevitable transition from communicative to cultural memory, and for ensuring that the Holocaust is not relegated to a footnote of history by students in classrooms.

The potential significance of graphic novels in history education has been written about by many. J. Spencer Clark has suggested that the narrative emphasis and the ways that both dialogue and nonverbal communication are employed makes history personal in a way that requires students to think about historical agency. It leads readers ‘to understand historical events as the result of much more than the historical actors’ choices’ (Clark 2014: 503) by recognizing the significance that context and history can play in shaping choices. Many graphic novels, including both *Belonging* and *The Property*, involve chronological leaps in which past and present are blurred together which show how the past remains active in the present. These linear and nonlinear readings ‘hold great potential as a useful pedagogical resource to explore ways in which the past is with us, but at the same time, remains beyond our reach’ (Cromer and Clark 2007: 585). Furthermore, the juxtaposition of word and image directly address the multisensory and multimodal ways that students learn today. This type of text is reflective of the textbooks that many schools employ today. Historical graphic novels ‘embed images within that primary flow’ (Boerman-Cornell 2015: 210) and can help to ensure that the reader gains a more complete understanding of the material.

Many scholars have argued that graphic novels are an important medium for relaying the experiences of Holocaust survivors and for being able to convey the magnitude of the event. Gorrara (2019: 112) writes: ‘the comic books has long been considered a medium able to disrupt conventional ways of seeing war’. Hillary Chute (2016: 31) notes how graphic novels about war communicate ‘an ethics of looking and reading that is intent on defamiliarizing standard or received images of history while yet aiming to communicate’ about those events. One of the most important technical traits that facilitate these powerful imaginings is the juxtaposition of images and words since they allow for the visualization of trauma alongside the dialogue and the verbal descriptors. The use of images serve as a powerful visual anchor and a testament to the

authenticity of the experience and the ways that the traumas of the Holocaust reverberate in the present. As well, unlike a film which dictates the pace for the viewer, graphic novels allow for the reader to dictate the pace of consumption as they navigate the page, filling in the gutters and blank spaces with their own imaginative interpretations of the story they are reading.

Art Spiegelman's *Maus* is often the starting point for any conversation about Holocaust graphic novels. Its place firmly solidified in the cannon, Spiegelman's work is included in many college and university literature, history, visual arts, and humanities courses. The publication of *Maus* ushered in a wave of Holocaust-focused graphic novels, including the two that are addressed in this paper. It is not the intention of this paper to encourage educators to replace *Maus* or to question its significance in Holocaust literature. Through narrating his father's story, Spiegelman raises important questions about how the legacy of the Holocaust is preserved for future generations and the roles that second and third generation descendants can play in serving as posthumous witnesses. In the following paper I focus exclusively on the unique features of Modan's and Krug's texts, specifically with regards to the non-Jewish components; this emphasis does not discount an important recognition that educators can certainly pair *Maus* with both *The Property* and *Belonging* as all three texts grapple with similar important questions about witnessing and reckoning with the past.

Published in 2013, Modan's *The Property* is a fictional story that follows Regina, a Holocaust survivor from Poland who is openly hostile to Poles, and her granddaughter Mica, as they travel from Israel to Poland to retake possession of an apartment that Regina's family owned before the war. Upon arrival in Poland, Regina learns that Roman, her former non-Jewish boyfriend, and the father of her recently deceased son, is living in her family's former home. Regina is initially angry with Roman and accuses him of stealing her family's property. It eventually emerges that Regina's parents forced Roman to stay away from Regina because he was not Jewish in exchange for the deed to the property. Additionally, Regina reveals to Roman that the son he never knew has died. Reminiscing over their shared tragedy of not being able to raise their son together, Regina promises to not attempt to take back the property that he had been guarding for almost seventy years.

Concurrent with Regina's narrative is one about Mica's budding romance with Tomasz, a non-Jew who leads tours throughout the Warsaw Ghetto for visiting groups. Mica actively rejects the notions of perpetual victimhood of the Jewish people and wants to be seen as a strong and independent female. Despite this desire, Mica struggles to understand Polish society, its legal mechanisms, and she even finds herself caught in the middle of a Warsaw Ghetto Uprising re-enactment. At this point, her 'personal efforts to avoid predetermined notions regarding the Holocaust and present-day Poland give way to an instinctive identification with the ultimate representation of Jewish victimhood' (Amihay 2017: 191) and she agrees to receive help from Tomasz to navigate Poland. Alongside his job as a tour guide, Tomasz is also a cartoonist at work on a graphic novel about the Warsaw Uprising.

Brygida Gasztold has observed how Modan inverts the typical Holocaust narrative by presenting a community of Poles who all express deep reverence and commitment to preserving the memory of the Holocaust, alongside a group of Israelis who are uninformed about it and are oftentimes anti-Polish. She writes: 'Poles are presented as open-minded and unbiased ... [which]

offers a stark contrast to Regina's anti-Polonism' (2017: 146). The effect of this contrast is to highlight 'the shallowness of such generalization when dealing with human emotions' (2017: 146) given the extremity of Modan's usage of hyperbole.

As a non-Jewish Pole, Tomasz plays an important role as a character who could deny or denigrate the experience of the Holocaust in a way that mirrors current Polish legislation and attitudes towards Jews. Instead, Tomasz has chosen to make his living by perpetuating the legacy and memory of the Holocaust by teaching the history of the Warsaw Ghetto to Jews and non-Jews. While Tomasz does profit off of the Holocaust as a tour guide and cartoonist, it is evident that financial remuneration is not his motivator. Beyond the sexual relationship that he forms with Mica, Tomasz invests time to help Regina come to terms with her relationship with Roman and the death of their son and he speaks to her in Polish so that she could privately process her feelings (Figure 1). Tomasz forms relationships with the Jews who come to visit Warsaw, even as he challenges them to consider the city a vibrant one and not only a cemetery where Jews can visit their ancestors. Tomasz rejects the simplistic notion that Jews have no place left in Poland and instead, by leading groups and actively working with Jews, he models a synthesis between past and present that tries to actively reposition Poland as a place where Jews can feel at home.



Figure 1: Tomasz explaining to Mica why he was able to comfort Regina, Modan, *The Property*, 2013. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, p. 139.

Even when Tomasz makes use of Regina's story in his graphic novel – an action that he later recognizes was inappropriate – he makes it clear that he has not appropriated her family's narrative as his own or for the purpose of profit. Conversely, by illustrating a graphic novel about the Polish Warsaw Uprising that includes stories about Jews and not only a Jewish story about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Tomasz models an investment in finding ways to integrate the historical Jewish experience – replete with all of its tragedies – into the larger narrative of Polish history. Significantly, whereas the majority of *The Property* employs a *ligne claire* style in which backgrounds are detailed but individuals are not, Tomasz's history of the Warsaw Uprising is illustrated in a photorealistic style. I see in the enjambment of the contrasting artistic styles an attempt by Modan to lead the reader to recognize that the two graphic novels are very different in nature. Employing Scott McCloud's understanding of how faces can be illustrated, Modan's cartoony employment of *ligne claire* allows the reader to see himself in the characters who are being drawn. Conversely, by illustrating Tomasz's graphic novel in a very realistic style for depicting the history of the Warsaw Uprising, the reader is not able to as easily assume a position that adopts the historical narrative as his own; however, what is gained by the style is an attempt

to depict history as literally and factually as possible (Figure 2). Employed in this way, photorealism is a creative method that is used to reject the narratives told by Holocaust deniers and to serve as a form of visual testimony against those who deny the history of what happened in World War II to both Jews and Poles.



Figure 2: Tomasz's realistic illustration of Hitler contrasted by depiction of his less realistic hand within the same panel, Modan, *The Property*, 2013. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, p. 88.

The character of Tomasz offers Jewish students a model of a non-Jew who is actively engaged in the preservation of national memory and who works to ensure that the legacy of the Holocaust is not forgotten. For while Tomasz never mentions any personal connection to the Holocaust, his concern with the preservation of memory revolves around how Poland remembers and commemorates its past, even the tragic parts. Tomasz's story moves beyond a trivialization of the Holocaust and suggests a model that 'promotes new, intertwined and multifaceted, understandings and deepened genuine relationships that allow for authentic exploration of the past given its relevance in the present' (Reingold 2019b: 177). This model stands in contrast to the ways that anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial are becoming more normative on a global scale.

Introducing Jewish students to Tomasz and the ways that he both personalizes the Holocaust by investing time interacting with Jews and for his commitment to ensuring that the Holocaust is not forgotten as a part of Polish history will likely be surprising to many students because his position is not the normative one of quick, easy and meaningless hashtags. It is a voice that moves slowly and laboriously to recreate the narratives of the past while also suggesting that Poland is a place that Jews should feel safe returning to in order to rebuild their lives. In my own experiences teaching about contemporary Jewish life in Eastern Europe, Israeli and North American Jewish students are shocked to discover that some Jews *want* to live in Poland given the historical and contemporary anti-Semitism. Introducing them to a figure like Tomasz who is invested in the Jewish narrative offers a window into an alternate Poland that is less prominently featured but is an important one for showing students different ways that non-Jews can actively reject the tropes of anti-Semitism and discrimination and instead work towards reconciling past with present on a national level by engaging with all types of Poles, Jews included.

Beyond the character of Tomasz, *The Property* addresses a number of other salient topics that would be of interest to educators who want to encourage their Jewish students to think about

the Holocaust in new ways. Both the opening and closing scenes include a group of Israeli students visiting Poland to tour Holocaust sites on a heritage trip. The trips' emphasis on the past and not the present, however, has led to a growing Polish disdain for the perpetuation of Polish responsibility irrespective of the 70 years that have elapsed since the end of the war (Fanjoy Silver: 2017). Gasztold has noted how in *The Property*, 'the young Israeli visitors ignore present-day Poland and its history after the Holocaust'; as a result, Poland becomes a 'pedagogical instrument in the formation of Jewish identity for young Israelis' (2017: 144-145). Contrasting this type of interaction are the relationships that emerge between Tomasz and Mica and Regina and Roman. Their relationships are non-linear and involve conflict and disagreement; they are real in a way that heritage trips are not. Most importantly, while the characters are clearly impacted by the past, they are also firmly rooted in present-day experiences and expressions of Polish-Jewish relations. Both pairings find ways to simultaneously evoke both the past and present, and through this, lead readers to consider new ways to build relationships between Poles and Jews. Modan's depictions of Tomasz and Mica and Regina and Roman model the types of engagement that the Israeli youth miss out on because "such an encounter might have served as a platform for dialogue, which could help overcome negative stereotypes and counter prejudice" (Gasztold, 2017: 145).

Unlike *The Property* which is a fictional story that is told in third-person, Krug's 2018 graphic novel *Belonging* is a first-person autobiography that chronicles her journey towards understanding her family's Nazi past in order to develop a better connection to her German identity from which she feels untethered because of the Holocaust. Krug's story is a deeply personal one and while it might reflect the experiences of other children and grandchildren of Nazis, she is primarily writing about her own process of discovery.

Krug's emphasis on the historicity of her family's experiences is vividly captured in the mixed-methods artistic style that she employs throughout *Belonging*. Interwoven among the panels about learning that her uncle and her grandfather fought for the Nazis are duplicates of photographs of her family from the Nazi period, family artifacts including school records and anti-Semitic essays that her uncle wrote while in grade school, and copies of archival material that recognized her grandfather as a follower – and not an active member – of the Nazi party. Memory, as modelled in the art form, is non-linear, stop and start, and draws on different elements that coalesce in an attempt to form cohesion. The efficacy of Krug's collage-like technique is that it clearly demarcates to the reader the personal and complex narrative that is her family's story.

It is a testament to Krug's ability as a narrator that she is able to balance her feelings of disappointment and discomfort because her grandfather voluntarily chose to be a Nazi with the reality that he did not actively participate in the murder of Jews. In the way that she writes about her grandfather, Krug rejects the tendency that Harald Welzer has observed in the children and grandchildren of Nazis who deny their relatives' involvement in the atrocities that were committed. He writes that many individuals incorrectly separate their own family members from Nazis, viewing their family members as merely Germans, and not people who participated in any crimes. This type of heroization 'shows how deeply an individual's awareness of history is affected by emotional views of the roles played by close relatives' (Welzer 2011: 180) and it obfuscates one of the more significant features of the Holocaust which is that a civilized



citizenry committed a genocide. Krug actively struggles with her heritage, lamenting a disconnect with her family and German nationality. Krug's complex relationship with Willi's past can serve as a valuable teaching moment for Jewish students as they can come to recognize how within the Nazi party there were both perpetrators and bystanders. More significantly, studying Krug's discomfort over her grandfather's past – even if he was a bystander – models for Jewish students how non-Jews struggle with how to synthesize their personal and familial experiences with the truth that their grandparents were tacitly complicit in genocide.

The heroization that Welzer refers to is present in Krug's work when her mother and her aunt struggle to accept that their father was a Nazi, preferring to not be made aware of any specific details. Krug (2018) accepts her aunt's desire to not fully confront the truth, commenting that 'everyone has just one father'. And yet directly interwoven with her family's desire to remain ignorant about the past is Krug's realization that the ways in which her family's story have been hidden have hindered her ability to form a meaningful relationship with her German identity and resulted in 'feelings of shame about herself and [led to] her feelings of homelessness' (Reingold 2019a).

Krug's search for the truth – even when it involves sharing unpleasant details with her Jewish husband – models the type of authentic self-exploration that effective humanities and social studies curricula can offer. What Krug comes to accept is that by synthesizing her family's dark history into her own life's story, she is able to 'develop a stronger and more nuanced relationship with her identity' (Reingold 2019a). Where students might struggle with Krug's text is the ways that she shares positive details about her family members, presenting them as human and relatable despite having fought for Hitler. Yet even as Krug shares that she sympathizes with her grandfather's post-war struggles to find employment because he was a Nazi, she equally recognizes that he was also a witness to attacks on Jews and their property and that he did not speak out against the violence. This honesty reaffirms her refusal to equate Jewish and German suffering. Krug is relegated to an uncomfortable position because she can neither fully accept nor fully reject her grandfather. While she wonders whether it would 'be easier to navigate [her] shame if [she] had been able to prove his guilt, if [she] had learned that he had been a Nazi through and through without the shadow of a doubt' (Krug 2018), Krug knows that this is not her family's story. Instead, Krug models the impossibility of ever knowing the full story of her family's past while showing the reader the importance of partial stories – even when they are uncomfortable – as a way for rebuilding a family in the shadow of the Holocaust.

Within *Belonging*, Krug does not apologize for the role that her family or nation played in the Holocaust. Despite this the text provides many important entry points for educators to facilitate conversations about the ways that the legacy of the Holocaust has been commemorated and remembered in Germany and elsewhere amongst non-Jews. Irrespective of an apology, Krug clearly feels shameful for her grandparents' actions. This tension raises important questions about the legacy of the Holocaust and posthumous guilt for the children of perpetrators. Through the act of chronicling her family's narrative, Krug suggests that while she cannot apologize for the past, neither is she absolved from learning about it and, where possible, repairing relationships. This understanding of posthumous responsibility for remembering is evident early in the text when she is dismissive of the ways that she learned about the Holocaust in school as an event that was taught but not discussed. She remembers feeling afraid to ask questions which led

to feeling shame and collective guilt over the past but not understanding why. Posthumous responsibility is evidenced in the process that Krug undertakes to both learn about the past and to confront family members who choose to remain willfully ignorant of it. Through this process, Krug comes to recognize the myriad ways that her family has been shaped by her grandparents' complicity in the Holocaust. The impact of the Holocaust on her family is in no way comparable to the impact on Jewish families; however, as a descendent with no obligation to bear responsibility, Krug actively tries to confront the past and bring it forward, much to her own shame. Introducing Jewish students to a non-Jewish German who experienced loss in the Holocaust is neither useful nor would it be appreciated given the role German played in perpetrating the Holocaust. Instead, what Krug offers through her narrative is an opportunity to learn about contemporary Germans who are willing to risk their familial relationships in order to uncover the past; through this, students can come to recognize the importance of learning their own histories, no matter how painful, and to see that there are non-Jews who are actively investigating the past and seeking to learn lessons from it.

Even though Krug does not directly address Jews, her graphic novel clearly demonstrates complex thinking about the Holocaust and the ways that the Holocaust continues to affect subsequent generations, including the descendants of perpetrators. What Krug's exploration is able to show a group of Jewish students is a side to the Holocaust that is less discussed – how the children of perpetrators needed to navigate their own feelings of shame over what their family did. Through her exploration, Krug shows her audience that 'it is possible to reconcile past with present in a way that enhances familial feelings' (Reingold 2019a) while doing so in a way that actively investigates the willful blindness that her family members have adopted. Krug argues that the intentional obfuscation of the past is what has contributed to her feelings of homelessness and rootlessness; confronting the past not only rebuilds relationships with her family but also allows her to reclaim her identity. The correlation between history and identity is significant for it shows that it is possible to bridge the chasm that can exist between generations affected by the shadow of genocide and shows that non-Jews must also learn how to grapple with the past in order to be better capable of navigating the present.

In response to Felix Klein's cautioning against wearing religious head coverings in some public spaces in Germany, the German tabloid *Bild* published a cut-out kippah on its front page, encouraging non-Jewish Germans to show solidarity with fellow Jews by wearing it (Guy 2019). While cute, it is a shallow response given the seriousness of the situation and the associated fears that Jews have with regards to safety and security. What both *The Property* and *Belonging* effectively do is to involve the non-Jewish voice in helping to ensure that the legacy, memory, and impact of the Holocaust is not forgotten. Both Tomasz and Krug – in very different ways – lead students to consider how the Holocaust is also a topic of relevance to non-Jews. Unlike the models of Holocaust education which promote universalization over specificity, Tomasz and Krug eschew platitudes like 'never again' and instead encourage the Jewish reader to become attuned to the idea that to effectively combat the rise of anti-Semitism involves partnering with non-Jews who model thoughtful ways of navigating the legacy of trauma as it has reverberated throughout the over 70 years since the end of the Holocaust. This type of education is one that recognizes that in a world of increasing Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism, the voices of non-Jews who testify to its veracity are essential in combatting apathy and anti-Semitism.

The two graphic novels also involve a reconceptualization around ownership of Holocaust stories. In her essay about a French Holocaust graphic novel about and by Jews, Gorrara (2019: 123) wrote that the text

helps us to rethink generation as the determining paradigm for the transmission of post-war Holocaust memories ... There is no one single experience of living as a Jew in wartime and post-war Poland and France and there are varied and differentiated post-Holocaust Jewish identities and trajectories.

With Tomasz and Krug, the Holocaust is shown to be an event in which stories can be shared and explored by non-Jews, and not only by Jews. While destabilizing the notions of ownership of the Holocaust by expanding the boundaries to include non-Jews, it reinforces an understanding that remaining entrenched in a legacy in which Jews are victims and non-Jews are only perpetrators is no longer reflective of the complex ways that the Holocaust has permeated non-Jewish society. Challenging Jewish students to reconsider what a Holocaust narrative is – by situating the story primarily in the present and not in the past – and also by prominently featuring non-Jews, forces Jewish students to think about the Holocaust in broader ways and to recognize that its impact, while primarily felt within their own community, extends well beyond it.

Both Tomasz and Krug are highly developed and complex characters who demonstrate traits and behaviours which might simultaneously anger and please the reader. What is most evident though is that their engagement with the Holocaust is three dimensional and multifaceted. Both characters show the significance of struggling and grappling with their own national and familial complicity, and more importantly, with what to do in the present as non-Jews living in the pale of the Holocaust. What results for the Jewish student is an opportunity to gain access to a world in which non-Jews are absorbed by Jewish history as part of their own familial and national histories. The exposure to voices which expands the types of existing Holocaust curricula can be used to introduce Jewish students to new ways of thinking about history and the place of the Jew in global history. Like Tomasz's graphic novel about Poland which tries to integrate Jews into Polish history, seeing that their stories are relevant to non-Jews can foster a reciprocal relationship that encourages Jewish students to explore communities and cultures outside of their own, and begin a process of greater reconciliation and mutual trust alongside non-Jews in order to combat racism and anti-Semitism in all of its permutations.

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